

Appendix 2

The Amalgamation of Walmer Science College (Community School) and Castle Community College (Academy)

Summary of the Public Meetings held on 17 October 2012 at Walmer Science College and 18 October 2012 at Castle Community College

Both meetings were chaired by Mr Leyland Ridings

The key issues raised are summarised below.

Walmer Science College meeting on 17 October 2012 attended by approximately 160 people including parents, staff, governors and other interested parties

Parents

There were concerns raised by several parents regarding the Maritime class recently opened by Princess Anne and whether this would continue if the merger went ahead.

- Mr Philip Bunn, Executive Headteacher confirmed that the Maritime class would continue.

Concerns were raised about a change of school uniform if the proposal goes ahead and the cost to parents.

- Mr Philip Bunn, Executive Headteacher responded that the any changes to the uniform would be funded by the Academy.

Will the Dyslexia Unit remain?

- Mrs Alison Osborne, Area Education Officer confirmed that there were no plans to alter the provision within this proposal and that it would continue.

Concerns were raised about staff losing their jobs.

- Robin Curtis, Chair of Governors at Walmer responded saying that there would need to be redundancies at Walmer Science College whether the proposal goes ahead or not, because significant saving would need to be made in order to reduce the deficit budget facing the school.

Other Comments

- Concerns were raised about class sizes if the proposal goes ahead.
- The proposal will remove choice for the families of Deal and Walmer.
- Concerns about the continuation of studies for children in the middle of GCSEs.
- Families like small schools and would not want their children educated in a large school.

- If the proposal doesn't take place, options for our children will be limited.
- The merger will be an opportunity for our children both educationally and socially.

Other Interested Parties

- The rising birth rate and new housing will result in more students coming forward in the future.
- This proposal is short-sighted and money driven.
- If the merger goes ahead it is hoped that the Walmer Science College site will stay as an education establishment and not be sold off for housing.
- A reserve plan needs to be put in place as to what happens to the Walmer Science College site and a commitment is required from KCC.
- We were told this proposal was a merger but it is the closure of Walmer Science College

Governors

- The governors of both schools are mindful of the impact on students of this proposal and will do everything to support the young people.
- This has not been an easy process for the governors but this proposal is in the best interests of the students at both schools

Castle Community College meeting on 18 October 2012 attended by approximately 150 people including parents, staff, governors and other interested parties

Parents

If the merger goes ahead, how will students be divided across both sites from next September?

- Mr Philip Bunn responded by saying that the Year 7 pupils would definitely be accommodated on the Castle Community College site and joint planning for the continued use of both sites was underway. It was not possible to give a definitive answer at this stage.

If the merger goes ahead will students be able to continue their Maritime studies at the new school?

- Mr Philip Bunn responded that students would be able to continue their Maritime studies if the proposal goes ahead.

Other Comments

- The primary rolls are rising, so the secondary rolls will.
- Home to school transport is being revoked and parents will not be able to afford transport to Sandwich and Dover secondary schools.
- Concerned about the additional traffic in Mill Road if the Academy is expanded and the distance that students will have to travel to school.

- Concerned that the merger would affect the students' grades.
- We chose this school because it is a small school.
- The money to rebuild Castle Community College should be shared between the schools in order to retain them both
- Concerns about how the children would settle into a large school, especially those with special educational needs and would they get enough support.
- Concerns were raised about bullying if the merger went ahead.
- Concern that if the merger does not go ahead Walmer Science College will just be left to fail.

Student

- Concerned about the impact of the merger on students' grades as Community College is doing very well.
- Why can't the money from Government to rebuild Castle Community College be used for both schools rather than creating one larger school?

Interested Parties

Why suppress the fact that this is the closure of Walmer Science College?

- Mrs Alison Osborne, Area Education Officer responded by saying that the governors had been anxious to avoid the word 'closure'. There has to be a technical closure of one school and the expansion of another as the legal way of achieving the amalgamation

Would staff transferring to the Academy be at a disadvantage?

- Mr Philip Bunn, Executive Principal responded that staff would remain on the same terms and conditions.

Assurances were sought that the Walmer Science College site would not be sold for housing development.

- Mr Kevin Shovelton, Director of Education Planning and Access responded that nothing had been decided about the future use of the site but there were sound ideas coming forward from the two meetings that KCC should be listening to.

The rising birth rate and Dover District Council's plans for new houses in the district were raised.

- Mrs Alison Osborne, Area Education Officer responded by saying that KCC had looked closely at the data provided to KCC on the birth rate in the district, Dover District Council's housing trajectory and the current and future numbers of secondary pupils in the locality.

Would the new school fund changes to school uniform so that parents would not incur the cost?

- Mr Philip Bunn, Executive Headteacher responded that the any changes to the uniform would be funded by the Academy.

Would Maritime studies continue as promised to Princess Anne?

- Mr Philip Bunn, Executive Principal responded that the course would continue and he would like to see it developed for the future but as with any new course, there can be no guarantees.

Would the Academy sell the Walmer Science College site?

- Mrs Alison Osborne, Area Education Officer responded that the Academy could not sell the land as it is owned by KCC and would be subject to a short term lease to the Academy Trust. During this time the community would be included in any discussions regarding the future of the site.

Other Comments

- The intake has dropped at Walmer because it was a failing school, but is now improving and numbers will go up again.
- It is not the size of the school that matters, it is the strength of the leadership and for an outstanding school you need outstanding staff.
- Academies are not community schools, they are independent schools run by an Academy Trust.

Governors

If this proposal does not go ahead, would it still be the plan to rebuild Castle Community College with the money from the Government?

- Mr Philip Bunn, Executive Principal responded that the Government had allocated the funding to rebuild Castle Community College to its original capacity which is 1,200-1,300 students and the project would still go ahead.

Other Comments

- The merger will bring better curriculum opportunities and better support for the students.
- Children do respond well to change and already work well together in the 6th form.
- The local press has not reported this proposal accurately or fairly.